

Buying A Media Job
by Sherman H. Skolnick

So, you want to be a talking head on a local TV station. And read the alleged "news" from the idiot machine.

Requirements:

1. You have to be about 28 years old.
2. If a woman, blondes preferred. Light-skinned blacks permitted BUT must look like a doll.
3. Must be able to read items about bloody wrecks, airplane disasters, and tornados without showing much visible emotion.
4. You cannot show any politics in what you are reading.

In most of the bigger markets, such as Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, you have to buy the job through the local, handful of celebrity lawyers. The terms are as follows: in a three-year contract, paying a big buck, you have to agree to pay under the table, a minimum of 15 per cent, in front, in cash, of the total amount you would receive in the first year of the contract. Of that, it is to be divided up as follows: one third to the union business agent, one third to the celebrity lawyer, and one third to the news director or station manager.

I have been on the periphery of the media since the early 1960s. A few examples have come to my attention. Because of our role as crusaders opening up scandals, items that are suppressed by the monopoly press are sometimes referred to us, on the sly, together with the corroborating details. Media people in key places confide in us. We never, never, never divulge sources. Judges that we have fingered publicly for bribery have numerous times over the decades, put me, as the head of our court reform group, in jail and prison for so-called "contempt of court", for absolutely refusing to divulge sources.

Over the decades as well I have become a sort of father confessor of media people with a problem. [I once taught civic investigation at a Chicago broadcast school.] Media people confide their problems to us, in confidence, knowing that we will never reveal who they are and will oftentimes come up with a proposed solution to save their neck and their job. I have usually met with such people in the middle of the night at some out of the way meeting place. What follows is a typical example:

"Sherman, the so and so's fired me. And I am only in the first year of my three-year contract. BUT, they cannot do that!" the media person forcefully exclaimed. "I paid in cash, in front, the fifteen per cent as required. I bought the job. The money was divided up on the business agent of the union, this special lawyer that handles the buying and selling of media jobs, and the balance went to the news director. I was also of course the right age and look. Hey, the job belongs to me. They cannot fire me!" he emphasized.

He outlined to me how this system works throughout the media industry. He offered other examples, some of which we already knew about from talking to other media people.

"I'll try my best to help you and keep all this confidential. After all, you and your pals have in the past given me the lowdown on several suppressed scandals, and gave me the rundown on the inside dirt at your outlet. So I owe you one." I told him.

"I bought the job, that's the system. They cannot fire me!" he repeated, his voice showing his anger.

In my most compassionate manner, I quietly told him. "Well, you are unfortunately in the same category, I am sorry to tell you, as a bank robber on the way from the stick-up. A crooked cop beats you up and rips off the loot for himself. And you want to sue for brutality and recovery of your property. Such a lawsuit is not allowed. It is, the courts say, against public policy, since you bought the job. It is against the public good to be buying and selling jobs, such as in the mass media." I showed I understood his plight.

"Listen, as an alternative, what kind of dirt do you have on the celebrity lawyer, the union business agent, and the news director? Maybe that would pressure the bastards to leave you alone." I asked.

"Why? You think I should turn them in to the IRS with this? The so and so's do not report the job pay-off money on their taxes." He responded.

"Aw, come on now, don't be silly. Right before the April 15th each year, the media honchos go along with the IRS and report a few evaders the IRS has fingered. So as to scare the rest of the public into sending in their form 1040 without question, just like it is required instead of actually, voluntary. The media bosses seldom go on the air with IRS corruption like we dig up." I told him.

No lawyer would undertake to sue for him. So, he went on to some other line of work.

Being handsome and personable, he was suitable for being a friendly, productive salesman.

Some long-time network reporters that confided in me were worried about their jobs and their pensions. A foreign outfit was trying to take over the news operation division. I gave them some inside data we compiled on the sharks trying to grab their section of the network. So, all of a sudden the veteran correspondents were sneaking by some hot, political assassination type items, during the night on the radio end. Sort of to scare a few would-be network grabbers. It worked.

In the process of all this, we found out the requirements for network correspondent to cover, for example, the White House: [1] As a woman, they have to start out about 40 years old. The networks push away women White House reporters if they are over 58 years old. Men, however, can cover the White House even if they are over 60, but not women. It is a form of known discrimination. Network news anchor faces usually do not have their contracts renewed if they approach 60 years old. Once in a while there is an exception.

Some of the younger reporters for networks that cover the White House, are actually assets of foreign intelligence agencies. One such reporter keeps track of all of the President's phone calls and meetings with persons in the White House. Hey, how is that done? Supposedly for a price, he will share the data with a reporter working on piecing together some supposed White House scandal.

In the 1960s and 1970s, I was often on the commercial TV for 40 seconds or so, talking about the voting cases that I brought in the federal courts being I am self-educated in law. I was called "Mr. One Man, One Vote" referring to the numerous election district reapportionment cases that I brought and won on behalf of myself and all voters similarly situated. But in 1988 I got put on the crap list for being too outspoken. I had confronted Don Hewitt, top honcho of CBS's "60 Minutes" Program. I gave him a lot of specifics about the buying and selling of media jobs. I was naive, I now realize, to believe that "60 Minutes" would expose this dirty business.

Don Hewitt screamed all over me and in so many words, told me I will never again be allowed on the TV anymore. After that, the only time you could see me on the TV as starting in 1991 when I became a regular panelist, later moderator/producer, of a non-commercial, public access weekly Cable TV Show in Chicago, called "Broadsides". The media types, by the way, are absolutely forbidden to mention that our popular Cable TV Show exists, or, for that matter, that I exist.

So, you want to be on the air on commercial TV, huh? Fine. Be the right type and look

and buy your job with cash in front. It is the system and so far, no one in authority is prepared to change it.

Stay tuned.